

Message #6**Hosea 4:1-19**

I recently received an amazing letter from a dear woman who was attending a Bible study in another state. At the Bible study the people were kicking around the idea of the boy who died and went to heaven and came back and told everyone about his experience. The basic idea that was being presented at this study was this experience and book and movie really proved there was a heaven.

Well, the woman who wrote me the letter had just got done listening to our web site and specifically our exposition of II Corinthians 12:1-6. She said she could not believe the timing of this. She waited until all of the pooled ignorance was done and then she said—do you really believe that God would allow some kid to go to heaven and come back and tell everyone about it when He would not permit Paul to even speak what he saw and heard? She said she was totally dumbfounded that no one at this study knew sound doctrine.

That is a major problem in most churches today. Many people today want to live their lives by feelings and experiences and not sound doctrine. But the truth is unless God's people are serious about understanding the books of the Bible and the Doctrines of the faith, they will end up as pathetic as Israel. They will end up ashamed and God will hold leadership accountable.

In this chapter we get to see what it actually was that caused the unfaithfulness. We get to see what went wrong in the relationship. We get to see how Israel ended up so far away from God. The primary point of this chapter is this:

IT WAS A DEPARTURE FROM THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD, CAUSED BY THE LEADERS, THAT LED TO MORAL DEPRAVITY THAT LED GOD TO BRING CHARGES AND PUNISHMENT AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE.

In this section we seem to leave the specific account of Hosea and his marriage and we begin a new section that extends to the end of the book and contains oracles of doom and hope. Even though we are not specifically dealing with Hosea's marriage, it is still in the background because there are allusions to the nation as mother and children and there are a number of references to spiritual harlotry and adultery.

Chapter four really seems to focus on the sins of the northern kingdom. There are four key themes that are developed in this chapter:

THEME #1 – God presents His case against His own family. **4:1-3**

Abraham Herschel, who has written a book called “The Prophets,” said that “The Lord is in love with Israel, but He also has a passionate love of right and a burning hatred of wrong” (p. 50).

God cannot and will not abandon Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness, but He can and He will make things miserable for her. There are chastening judgments that God will send to His own family, in order to get them back to Him.

Verse 1 develops the idea that this is the Word of the LORD and it is specifically aimed at Israel, the family of God. God has a judicial case against His own family. Dr. Bruce Waltke said these messages in this chapter actually “form a lawsuit” (*Old Testament Theology*, p. 836). God has a legal right to judge His own family and we learn reasons why:

Reason #1 - Because there is no faithfulness in the land. **4:1c**

Think about this charge. Israel was in her promised land and no one was faithful or trustworthy in regard to Him and His Word and will.

Reason #2 - Because there is no kindness in the land. **4:1d**

This particular word (hesed) has to do with a kindness and loyalty.

Reason #3 - Because there is no knowledge of God. **4:1e**

There was no evidence that any in this land knew God. The people of God had completely lost their way. They were not faithful to God; not loyal to God and didn't even have true knowledge of God. These were God's own people.

Reason #4 - Because there is swearing. **4:2a**

This probably has reference to the fact that God's own people were swearing oaths to other things other than God.

Reason #5 - Because there is deception. **4:2b**

God's own people were not straight-shooting truth setters, they were deceptive.

Reason #6 - Because there is murder. **4:2c**

Depravity had reached such a low that there were murders committed even among God's own people.

Reason #7 - Because there is adultery. **4:2d**

God's own people were pursuing immoral things.

Reason #8 - Because there is violent bloodshed. **4:2e**

One commentator said, “violent crimes were so common that they seemed to follow one another without interruption” (Thomas Constable, *Notes On Hosea*, p. 26).

In **verse 3** God says this is the reason I am not blessing you in your land. This is the reason why your life and land is not flourishing. This is why your existence is one big drought. No one in My family is interested in God and His Word. No one was interested in doing God’s will. This was God’s own family and they were pathetic.

Now carefully observe the chronology of these verses. No knowledge of God leads people to do horrible things. The cause is “no knowledge of God” and the effects are the things in the list.

We live in a country where politicians are groping for answers as to how to lower crime and promote decency. The answer is simple—give people the true knowledge of God and it will have a tremendous effect on the nation.

THEME #2 – God presents His case against religious leadership. **4:4-10**

Now **verse 4** is tricky, but it seems to me the primary point of it is in view of how corrupt and sinful things are, **don’t blame the people because the people aren’t the real problem; the real problem is the leadership.**

In other words, even though this nation is filled with all of these evil sins, don’t spend your life finding fault with the people, because the real problem lies with the religious leaders. Your real point of contention lies with the priests and prophets who are not doing their job.

Now we get a list of actions that the religious leaders were responsible for:

Action #1 - They stumble by day. **4:5a**

When leaders are not interested in the Word and will of God, the people stumble. They stumble during the day. They don’t even walk through a day right with God, because they don’t know the Word of God.

Action #2 - They stumble by night. **4:5b**

You may be certain if the people are stumbling by day, they are sure stumbling by night.

Action #3 - They reject true knowledge and refuse to teach true knowledge. **4:6a**

Do you see this key point? People are destroyed for lack of knowledge. When leaders do not see to it that the Word of God and doctrines of God are carefully taught, people are destroyed.

Action #4 - They forgot the Law of God. **4:6b**

This is a reference to the Word of God.

Action #5 - They multiply in number and in sin. **4:7**

There is a great multiplication of ministers today, but very few are hungering and thirsting for the Word of God.

May we ask a personal question of you this morning? Is sin in your life increasing or decreasing? Are you multiplying righteousness or sinfulness?

Action #6 - They feed on the sin of God's people. **4:8**

These leaders pursue their iniquity at the expense of God's people. They make their living off of God's people and feed off of it. They were taking the offerings and the money and they just continued pursuing their own pagan lifestyle.

Because of this God says in **verse 9** that both people and priests will be punished by God. What they did to the people, God will do to them. They caused the people to be destroyed (**v. 6**) so God will destroy them.

It is imperative that God's people be in a church where they are accurately and faithfully taught the Word of God. There is a lot on the line. Churches and leaders in God's churches can actually lead to blessings or cursings.

According to **verse 10** their fertility and prosperity would come to an end. God would specifically send drought and scarcity of food as a punishment against His own people. His own people would have to scrounge around just to survive.

They would continue to go to their false worship services and continue to pursue their immoral behavior, but what they will discover is they will not increase in any way. The reason they will not increase is because they have stopped giving heed to the Lord.

When God's people stop listening to the Word and will of God, it is the beginning of the end for them. Nothing they do will make them happy. Nothing they do will be blessed by God. Even though they go to their worship services, all it means is judgment.

THEME #3 – God presents reasons why His people are ruined. **4:11-14**

God presents several reasons why His people are in a ruined condition:

Reason #1 - Because of their immorality. **4:11a**

Sexual immorality will ruin you. It will take away your understanding and cause you to act like you are out of your mind.

Reason #2 - Because of their drunkenness. **4:11b**

Drunkenness will ruin you. It will take away your ability to think right.

Reason #3 - Because of their active participation in idolatry. **4:12a**

Don't miss the context of all of this—when you are involved in religious things that are not true to the Word of God, you are actually straying from God and His Word and it will leave you without understanding. You will not know what truth is anymore. You will not even know where to turn to find truth.

Reason #4 - Because of their active departure into harlotry. **4:12b**

Again we come to the theme of sexual immorality. It can lead people away from God faster than almost any other sin. There is no question that the Apostle Paul said that sexual immorality is a different kind of sin that will actually cause one to lose not only mental reason, but eternal rewards. This is exactly why Paul said to “flee immorality” (I Corinthians 6:9, 16-18).

Reason #5 - Because of their false worship. **4:13a**

According to the end of **verse 13**, the reason why the daughters were involved in prostitution and the reason why brides commit adultery is because all of this was promoted by the men.

In fact, in **verse 14** God says I won't even punish the daughters or the brides because it is the men and the false leaders who are promoting all of this. God's people were being ruined because the male leadership refused to lead the people into the pure, true, right ways of God.

This is interesting to me because in our social world, generally speaking, men's sins are treated more leniently than a woman's sin. But it doesn't work that way in God's world. God will hold the men accountable and specifically He will hold the male leadership accountable.

THEME #4 – God warns to prevent some of His people from falling into the same sin.
4:15-19

We may recall that when this book of Hosea began, in the first verse there was a reference to four kings of Judah and one king from Israel. So this book would be applicable to all of God's family. This text warns that there is serious accountability for one who would lead others away from a true understanding of God and His Word.

Preventative #1 - God warns Judah not to become guilty like Israel. **4:15a**

Preventative #2 - God warns Judah not to go to Gilgal. **4:15b**

Preventative #3 - God warns Judah not to go to Beth-aven. **4:15c**

Gilgal and Beth-aven were two pagan cult sites. In fact, the name “Bethel” means “House of God” and the name “Beth-aven” means “House of Wickedness.”

God did not want them going to these false places of evil worship and taking oaths like Israel.

Preventative #4 - God warns He does not shepherd and care for a rebellious people. **4:16**

When God’s people pursue sin, it takes them out from the shepherding protection and provisions of God. God can shepherd and bless His people and He delights in doing this. However, God may also take away His blessings.

Preventative #5 - God warns His people that they would end up ashamed. **4:17-19**

Because of their drunken, idolatrous immorality, God would see to it that His people would be blown away and blown into shame.

Ephraim is often a title used to refer to the lush areas of northern Israel. Ephraim represented the largest tribe in the Northern Kingdom and it was representative of the nation Israel as a whole. Hosea uses this as a term for Israel some 36 times.

In **verse 18** God once again refers back to the drunkenness and immorality. The rulers were leading the people into these things.

But God says in **verse 19**, in the end the winds of chastising judgment will blow against Israel and blow them away and they will be ashamed.

God’s people need to realize that they will have a day in court. There will be a day of accountability. God’s people have a choice. They can pursue that which is fleshly or that which is spiritual. They can dabble in immorality or drunkenness or all kinds of religion, but in the end they will end up ashamed.

Wise are the people who spend their time carefully studying God’s Word and applying it to life. Those people will discover God will shepherd them, prosper them and bless them.